

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4709

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID, BG, IN, NP
SUBJECT: SATELLITE SYSTEM FOR METEOROLOGICAL AND
HYDROLOGICAL MONITORING IN BANGLADESH

REF: STATE 63095/1

1. WE BELIEVE THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF A METEOROLOGICAL
AND HYDROLOGICAL MONITORING PROJECT PROPOSED REFTEL IS
A GOOD ONE, WITH OBVIOUS MERIT FROM A HUMANITARIAN AND
ECONOMIC STANDPOINT. AS REFTEL NOTES, HOWEVER, THERE
ARE POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN GAINING INDIAN
COOPERATION IN SUCH A PROJECT ON A REGIONAL BASIS.

2. IN OUR VIEW, A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE US ARMY
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, AND LATER THE PLACEMENT BY THEM OF
ELECTRONIC SENSING DEVICES IN POLITICALLY SENSITIVE
EASTERN INDIA, IS UNLIKELY TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE
INDIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AT THIS TIME. THE FACT
THAT THIS PROJECT WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN AT THE INSTANCE
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OF AND IN COOPERATION WITH THE BDG WOULD RAISE
SUSPICIONS AGAINST THAT GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS THE
US. MOREOVER, WHILE THE GOI IS GIVEN TO SPEAKING
IN GENERAL TERMS ABOUT THE NEED FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION,
IT HAS NOT SHOWN ANY ENTHUSIASM FOR SUCH AN APPROACH
TO WATER DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS.

3. WE THINK THIS LACK OF ENTHUSIASM STEMS IN LARGE PART FROM INDIA'S REACTION TO BANGLADESH'S EFFORT TO "INTERNATIONALIZE" FARAKKA IN THE PAST AND TO SEEK TO MAKE THE BILATERAL TALKS ON THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO FARAKKA TRILATERAL WITH NEPAL, IF NOT INTERNATIONAL THROUGH SEEKING WORLD BANK OR OTHER ASSISTANCE AT AN EARLY STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. WITH THE BDG AND THE GOI'S PRESENTING TO THE JOINT RIVERS COMMISSION THIS MONTH THEIR LONG-TERM PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION AT THE NEXT MEETING, THE BDG'S COMING FORWARD NOW WITH A REGIONAL PROPOSAL FOR MONITORING THE RIVERS MIGHT BE SEEN AS ANOTHER INTERNATIONALIZING EFFORT. SUCH SUSPICIONS ARE APT TO EXIST EVEN THOUGH THE PURPOSE OF THE MONITORING PROPOSAL IS WEATHER FORECASTING. AS REFTEL NOTES, THE PROJECT WOULD HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR RIVER ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AND THUS COULD HAVE A POTENTIAL BEARING ON THE JOINT RIVERS COMMISSION'S NEGOTIATIONS ON A LONG-TERM SCHEME FOR AUGMENTING THE GANGES WATER.

4. INDIA DOES HAVE AN INTEREST IN FLOOD CONTROL AND DISASTER PREVENTION, AND IN THIS RESPECT WE NOTE THAT THEY WILL BE LAUNCHING NSAT IN 1980. THOUGH RESOLUTION OF DATA WILL NOT BE AS HIGH AS IT WILL BE IN THE CASE OF AN ORBITING TIROS SATELLITE (FROM WHICH WE ASSUME INDIA WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO COLLECT DATA), WE
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UNDERSTAND THAT INSAT WILL GATHER MUCH THE SAME METEOROLOGICAL INFORMATION AS PROPOSED IN REFTEL, AND FROM THE SAME AREA. IF THIS IS THE CASE, WE MIGHT SUGGEST THAT THE BDG CONSIDER EXPLORING A BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT WITH INDIA FOR SHARING THE DATA COLLECTED BY INSAT, WHILE PROCEEDING WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT INVOLVING HYDROLOGY AS WELL WITH US ASSISTANCE. IN THIS WAY WE MIGHT SUCCEED IN ENCOURAGING REGIONAL COOPERATION ON WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN A MANNER THAT ACKNOWLEDGED INDIA'S CONCERN FOR A BILATERAL APPROACH TO SPECIFIC PROBLEMS. WE ARE UNSURE OF THE TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY OF THIS APPROACH BUT SUGGEST IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING THAT OFDA COULD EXPLORE WITH NASA.
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